



Department of Justice

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STATEMENT OF U.S. ATTORNEY JOHNNY SUTTON REGARDING THE PROSECUTION OF BORDER PATROL AGENTS COMPEAN AND RAMOS

“For months, there has been a concerted effort by a few to intentionally distort the facts of the Compean and Ramos case. However, after a trial that lasted two and a half weeks, where facts were presented and the case was argued, Agents Compean and Ramos were unanimously found guilty by a jury in the United States Federal District Court. In order to dispel the myths and set the record straight, I have listed the facts of the case below:

“Agents Compean and Ramos were prosecuted by my office because they committed a number of serious crimes. They shot 15 times at an unarmed man who was running away from them and posed no threat. They lied about what happened, covered up the shooting, conspired to destroy evidence and then proceeded to write up and file a false report.

“United States Border Patrol agents are some of America's most unsung heroes. They have an enormously difficult job and, at times, they face great danger.

“The law recognizes that agents will make mistakes and the government takes responsibility for good faith mistakes made in the line of duty. But no agent is given license to willfully shoot an unarmed, fleeing suspect in the back simply because the job is difficult, dangerous or important. The job of federal prosecutors is to enforce the laws the best we can. If law enforcement officers break the law, they have to face the consequences just like anyone else. Agents Compean and Ramos were unanimously found guilty by a jury in a United States Federal District Court after a trial that lasted more than two and a half weeks. Both agents told their stories from the witness stand and had full opportunities to explain their version of events and to offer their own evidence. The jury heard everything including their claims of self defense. The jury did not believe their stories because they were not true.

“In this case, the evidence showed that around 1:00 p.m. MT Aldrete, the Mexican alien, initially ran from the agents, but attempted to surrender with his empty hands raised over his head after Agent Compean pointed his shotgun at him. When Agent Compean tried to push Aldrete to the ground with the butt of his shotgun, Agent Compean tripped and fell. Aldrete then took off running again toward the Rio Grande River and Mexico. Compean chased Aldrete, firing at him with his pistol 14 times, pausing once to reload and then shoot some more. Agent Ramos shot once and struck Aldrete in the buttocks. Neither agent made any further effort to apprehend him. After the shooting, they lied to their supervisors about the shooting, picked up and threw away the fired shell casings and filed a false investigative report leaving out any mention of the confrontation with Aldrete.

“If Compean and Ramos truly believed Aldrete was a threat, why did they abandon him after shooting him? And if they truly believed the shooting was justified, why did they not report it, leave the scene undisturbed, and let the investigation absolve them? The answers to these questions are simple. The agents knew that Aldrete did not pose a threat as he fled, they knew the shooting was unjustified and unlawful, and they knew an investigation would incriminate them. So they chose to cover up their crimes.

“In America, law enforcement officers do not get to shoot unarmed suspects who are running away, lie about it to their supervisors and file official reports that are false. That is a crime, and prosecutors cannot look the other way.”

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